



Franklin County
Common Pleas Court - General Division

EXHIBIT

136

Policy: Code of Ethics and Conduct

Qualifying Employees: All employees of the Common Pleas Court

Initially Approved by the Court: September 19, 2017

Initial Effective Date: September 19, 2017

Date Amended Policy Effective: April 16, 2019

Amendment Dates:

I. Purpose

To establish expectations of acceptable workplace behavior and performance for all employees.

II. Definitions

Social Media means any form of electronic communication, including but not limited to, websites and applications, through which users create and share content or participate in social networking.

III. Policy

A. Code of Ethics

1. Employees shall perform their duties in an ethical manner.
2. Employees must, at all times, abide by Ohio's ethics laws located within Ohio Revised Code chapters 102 and 2921, as well as the Code of Judicial Conduct.
3. Employees should treat their employment as a public trust, using the powers and resources of court employment only to advance the public good. In treating court employment as a public trust, employees shall:
 - a. **PURSUE THE PUBLIC INTEREST:** Diligently and in good faith pursue the public interest to the best of their abilities and subordinate self-interest to the public good.
 - b. **BUILD PUBLIC RESPECT:** Build public confidence that the court business is conducted with honesty, integrity, and a concern for justice and is, therefore, worthy of respect, trust and support. Serve the public with respect, concern, courtesy,

and responsiveness, recognizing that service to the public is beyond service to oneself.

- c. **STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE:** Strive for personal excellence and accept as a personal duty the responsibility to keep up to date on emerging issues and to administer the court's business with professional competence, fairness, impartiality, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- d. **PRACTICE STEWARDSHIP:** Manage resources to maximize value for county citizens, avoid excessive and unreasonable or unnecessary expenses, and use public resources, including property and time, only for public work. Evaluate all decisions so that the best service or product is obtained at a minimal cost without sacrificing quality and fiscal responsibility.
- e. **EMBODY INTEGRITY:** Faithfully comply with all laws and regulations applicable to the court and impartially apply them to everyone. Eliminate all forms of illegal discrimination, fraud, and abuse of public funds, and support co-workers' and others' efforts to correct such discrimination, fraud, or abuse. Faithfully administer the affairs of the Court. Refrain from using their county position to exert improper influence.
- f. **AVOID IMPROPRIETY AND THE APPEARANCE OF IMPROPRIETY:** Avoid real or potential conflicts between private and public duties. Avoid receiving, soliciting, or otherwise obtaining anything of value from any other public official, employee, business, or citizen, which is intended to influence the performance of official duties. Disclose to the appropriate authority the nature and extent of any financial or personal interest in a Court contract, legislation, or in any type of transaction involving the Court.
- g. **PROTECT PRIVACY:** Keep private all information acquired by your employment except when disclosure is required. Information that is confidential should not be disclosed unless required by law.
- h. **EMBRACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS:** Embrace diversity and inclusiveness in order to reflect the communities we serve and ensure that diversity contributes to the development of our mission and the common good in a changing society.

B. Code of Conduct

- 1. Certain conduct is specifically prohibited, including but not limited to the following. Employees shall not:

- a. Use of Authority/Position
 - i. Use their position for gain, financial or otherwise, for (a) themselves, (b) their households, or (c) a business with which they, or a member of their household, is associated.
 - ii. Solicit or receive a gift that will influence their official action.
 - iii. Use Court property or facilities for private gain.
 - iv. Use confidential information received because of their position for private gain.
 - v. Solicit or receive a promise of future employment with the understanding the promise will influence their official action.
 - vi. Accept, solicit, or use the authority or influence of their position to secure anything of value from a party interested in doing business with the court.
 - vii. Use, or authorize the use of their title, the name "Franklin County Common Pleas Court" or the Court's logo in a manner that suggests impropriety, favoritism or bias.
- b. Workplace Behavior
 - i. Fail to conduct themselves civilly in the workplace, during working time, or while representing the Court. This includes immoral or indecent conduct, dishonesty, illegal gambling, fighting, coercion, dangerous or potentially dangerous horseplay, disorderly conduct, bullying, being disrespectful, verbally or nonverbally intimidating or harassing others, and the use of vulgarity or profanity.
 - ii. Refuse to obey the direct order of a supervisor (insubordination).
 - iii. Refuse to be searched or have personal property examined by security personnel or law enforcement officials where there is reasonable cause for a search.
 - iv. Willfully hinder, limit, or sabotage Court operations or business.
 - v. Work overtime without authorization.
 - vi. Have excessive unplanned absences or tardiness without valid excuse and/or proper notification, or falsely report the reason for absence or tardiness.
 - vii. Establish a relationship with any client of the Court during the time the client is under the supervision by any department of the Court.

- viii. Engage in financial transactions with clients, unless authorized.
- ix. Employ corporal punishment or unnecessary force.
- x. Engage in critical discussion of employees or individuals under the supervision of the Court in front of others under the supervision of the Court.
- xi. Abuse, deface, or destroy Court/County property or the property of other employees.
- xii. Distribute unauthorized literature or post notices, signs, or writings in any form on County premises during work time and in work areas.
- c. Falsification
 - i. Falsify, alter or destroy Court records without authorization.
 - ii. Record one's own or another employee's time records, inaccurately, for the purpose of creating a false record or defrauding the Court.
 - iii. Make or publish, either directly or indirectly, false or malicious statements about any employee, supervisor, the Court, or any other individual.
 - iv. Supply false or misleading information or withhold pertinent information when applying for employment or at any time during their employment with the Court.
- d. Failure to Report
 - i. Fail to report an absence from work for three (3) consecutive working days.
 - ii. Fail to report employee behavior that is or may be illegal, unethical, discriminatory, and/or abusive.
 - iii. Fail to report any conditions of health or safety which might endanger themselves or others.
 - iv. Fail to observe established fire and safety rules, or common safety practices.
 - v. Fail to report any personal injury or accident sustained while in the course and scope of employment.
- e. Illegal Substances or Weapons
 - i. Possess, consume, sell, or be under the influence of illegal drugs, hallucinogens, narcotics or related drugs, medically unauthorized prescription drugs or alcohol or have the presence in their system any of the above described substances during working time, while operating Court/County equipment, or acting on behalf of the Court.
 - ii. Fail to submit to drug or alcohol testing upon request.

- iii. Possess dangerous or deadly weapons on Court property, or while in the performance of Court duties, unless authorized to possess the weapon.
- f. Performance/Appearance
 - i. Fail to perform work assignments satisfactorily, safely, and efficiently.
 - ii. Loiter or sleep on the job.
 - iii. Solicit, sell, or distribute items during work time.
 - iv. Fail to maintain good personal appearance or hygiene which interferes with their professionalism or adversely affects the image of the Court.
 - v. Smoke in other than designated areas, or improperly dispose of smoking materials.
- g. Conflicts or Unlawful Behavior
 - i. Be engaged with outside employment that conflicts or interferes with their current position.
 - ii. Discriminate against anyone on any basis protected by law.
 - iii. Offer, take, or solicit a bribe or gratuity in connection with any Court negotiation or transaction.
- h. Social Media - This section does not apply to disclosures or postings where an employee has been directed to do so as a part the employee's scope of duties and responsibilities.
 - i. Disclose any information or post any content regarding pending, potentially pending, or other court-related matters, including comments regarding parties, attorneys, or participants who appear before the Court.
 - ii. Use a court email address for social media (e.g., blogs, Facebook, Twitter).
 - iii. Post any photographs or videos of the following that may compromise Court security, the security of judges or individual employees:
 - I. official meetings;
 - II. official trainings; or
 - III. work-related items, products or activities.
 - iv. Use the Court seal, display uniforms, or display Court equipment.

C. Grounds for Disciplinary Action

1. Failure to comply with this policy may result in progressive discipline, up to and including dismissal.
2. Incompetency, inefficiency, dishonesty, immoral conduct, insubordination, intoxication, discourteous treatment of the public, neglect of duty, failure of good behavior, misfeasance (doing something inadequately or poorly), malfeasance (doing something wrong), nonfeasance (failing to do something), violation of Ohio Law, violation of Court policy, violation of department work rules, or conviction of a felony constitute grounds for discipline.